

know, the century only changes once every 100 years, and this country is changing dramatically, the way we work, the way we live, the way we relate to the rest of the world. It is changing. And ask people, what do you want America to look like when we go into that new century? What do you want America to look like when our children are our age? In 100 years what do you want people to say that we did at this moment in time with our responsibility?

If what we do is to create opportunity for everybody who is willing to work for it, if we prove that unlike all these other countries that are torn apart by their differences, we can be a country of different races, different religions, different points of view, bound together by our fidelity to the American system and American

values, that we can lead the world—that's what I want the story to be. If those are the questions people ask before the election in November, 39 days from now, I believe I know what the answers will be. You go out and reach out to other citizens so that we can go forward and build that bridge to the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. at Tyler and Center Streets. In his remarks, he referred to Martha Whitehead, former mayor of Longview; Ann Richards, former Governor of Texas; Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro; State Supreme Court judicial candidate Frank Maloney; and Texas senatorial candidate Victor Morales.

Interview With Kathy Lewis of the Dallas Morning News and Nancy Mathis of the Houston Chronicle in Longview September 27, 1996

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Q. We'd like to talk to you about Texas politics. But if I could just ask you one sort of Texas news-of-the-day question, Mr. Morales is in some hot water over remarks he made a couple days ago. What is your assessment of that?

The President. Mike put out a statement, and that's what I agree with. I think that he said something he regretted and he apologized for it, and I think that's a good thing. You know, if you stay in this business long enough, the closer you get to the campaigns, the more you're working, the less you're sleeping, the more you're under pressure, you're going to—every now and then people say something that they wish they hadn't said. And I think the thing to do is just simply say that you wish you hadn't said it. And that's what he did. I thought it was a big thing for him to do. So that's what I think about it.

Q. Why do you think you can carry Texas?

The President. Number one, because Texas is better off than it was 4 years ago. The State of Texas has done well under our policies, both our general economic policies and the specific things I supported, like the space station and the V-22, which is made in Fort Worth, for

example. Number two, my plans for the future would be better for the State of Texas than Senator Dole's program. And number three, Bill White and Garry Mauro and all these grassroots Democrats have worked hard to kind of rebuild the party at the grassroots level. And I've worked hard to try to change the relationship of the national Democratic Party, of Texas. For too long, the Democrats just sort of gave up on Texas. So they'd come to Texas and raise money and turn around and leave, and I thought that was wrong. And we've worked out an agreement—it's been in place now for some time, you know—sending a lot of the money that we raised back to Texas, try to help build the party.

And I guess, finally, because I think that last time when I ran I didn't really get a clear shot at the voters, even though I did campaign here a couple days. And I was from Arkansas and I had two opponents from Texas, and I think it sort of put me in a hole—that and then some of the things that happened early in my term. And I think that, you know, obviously now people are beginning to look at what my record is, what we've done, my ideas about the future as compared with my opponent's.

And I just think that for all those reasons we have a chance to win. If we can get people

to look at the evidence, as opposed to kind of the accumulated rhetoric of the last 20 years, I think I've got an excellent chance to win.

Q. Does your financial commitment here depend on Senator Dole pulling out of California?

The President. No. No.

Q. Because he's not running any ads here right now.

The President. No, I think that they probably think that they can't lose Texas, you know, because Kansas is close and there's—you know, a lot of the State officials, major State officials, the two Senators, the Governor are Republicans, and they probably think that they can't lose.

But my commitment here—a lot of what I try to do is to help them build the grassroots strength again, to go back into communities. When Bill White left our administration, left the Energy Department and came home here, he really wanted to build kind of a mainstream, progressive Democratic Party in Texas again at the grassroots. And I've tried to support that. And we made an agreement then—he and Truman Arnold, some others—if I raised any funds in Texas, we'd kick back a certain percentage to Texas.

And I also told them I'd—you know, I wasn't interested in coming to Texas anymore just for fundraising; I didn't believe in that. I wanted to see the people. And that's why we're here in Longview, we're going to Fort Worth, and we're going to be overnight in Houston when I go to do our event there.

You know, in the last 40 days we're going to have pretty well, for a while at least, just kind of play it by ear in terms of what else—what we do in terms of television ads because of the—we had run some, you know, in Texas already. We did some in east Texas earlier. But what we do, it depends in part on what the other competing considerations are. I don't know whether—you know, you told me something I don't know. I thought the Dole campaign was still running ads in California.

Q. No, I meant in Texas. They're not running in Texas. I guess the point I was getting at, in '92 you came within 2 or 3 percentage points of President Bush, even though your campaign spent very little money here—although you spent quite a bit of time here. And Bush spent a lot of money here and time as well. I was just wondering if you were going to make a financial commitment as well as a commitment of your time.

The President. Well, let me just say, those aren't decisions, believe it or not, that I'm personally reviewing here every day. So I can't answer that specifically. But we plan to make a major effort here. And I hope it will be helpful to the others who are running, because I think the more we get the message out, the more we get the record out, the more we get the contrast out, the more likely we are to do well here.

You look at a place like Longview and all these places all through east Texas, it's pretty much like the economy of Arkansas, which also has a 15- or 20-year low in unemployment rates. And I'm doing well there because they know me and I was their Governor and they trust me. But we haven't done as well here because the Republicans have had a big leg up and they did a pretty good job of kind of characterizing me in a way that would not be acceptable to a lot of Texas voters. And I've been trying to climb out of that for 3 or 4 years, and I think the sheer weight of the evidence is finally beginning to be felt. And I think people are fundamentally fairminded. And I have a certain affinity for this State. I spent a lot of time here—ever since the last nearly 40 years, I've been coming to Texas in one way or another. And so I just think I ought to make an effort here, and I intend to do it.

I also think it's a mistake for anybody who wants to lead the country to not make an effort in the second biggest State in America. The future of the United States is in no small part going to be the future of the State of Texas. The attitudes of the people here about immigration, about trade, about education, about health care policy, about economic policy, about what's the best way to reduce crime and welfare, all this—what happens here will have a big impact on how the rest of the country goes. And I just think it's not responsible for any President just to not be engaged in it.

Immigration Legislation

Q. Will you sign the immigration bill if it passes Congress as it's written now, or will you press for the Members to change the provisions dealing with public benefits and legal immigrants?

The President. Well, right now we are—let me say this: I don't want to dodge this question, but I have to because it is the subject of negotiations, even as we are talking here. We're try-

ing to work out a set of agreements with congressional leadership, the Republican leadership and the Democrat leadership, on a set of continuing resolutions on the unresolved budget matters that we can put into one big bill that will enable them to go home—they read them this morning—go home and at least have a month to campaign. And I understand that.

So we were successful in getting the Gallegly amendment out, which I strongly opposed. I believe Governor Bush came out against it, and I appreciate that. And there are still some things in that bill that I don't like. I think they are unfair to legal immigrants. So I would hope that we could secure some improvements. But the less I say, the better now, while they're talking it through. Anything I say might—

Press Secretary Mike McCurry. Mr. President, I'm actually calling those—we've been calling those an omnibus appropriations bill, as opposed to a continuing. It's sort of like continual, but they would actually complete the appropriations bill, as opposed to a continuing.

The President. There is a chance we can?

Press Secretary McCurry. I think what they've been working on—what Leon's—the latest report from him is that we really are—we've got the prospect of taking all six of these bills and putting them in an omnibus appropriations bill.

The President. You know, we were so close on all the bills but one. Once we got an agreed-upon education funding level, we were so close I was hoping maybe we could do it.

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Q. Mr. President, this must seem very different to you today than '94. I mean, you basically didn't come to Texas in '94, and the general feeling was candidates didn't welcome your presence then. Do you agree with my assessment?

The President. I do agree with that.

Q. Okay. What caused you to be in such bad shape then and—

The President. Well, for one thing, I think that—two of the things I mentioned in my speech. I think that the things that candidates all over the country and Members of Congress are trumpeting, the people supporting me today, were directly out of decisions that were made in '93 and '94 that were unpopular then that have been proved right now. And the two that I mentioned specifically are the economic program and the crime bill.

You heard me say, I remember very well when Senator Gramm said, "If you pass this economic program, it's just going to be a terrible thing. It's going to have a big recession, and everybody's income will go down. It'll be awful." And of course the results are just the opposite. But I think that they were effective in attacking that.

I think the second thing is, in the crime bill, they—in a lot of rural places that had a lot of Democratic voters but were real conservative voters, like east Texas, there was an effective attack on the Brady bill and the assault weapons ban that, you know, this was somehow going to lead to the impairment of hunters' and sports men and women's rights. And of course, now we know it didn't do it, but it did help to lower the crime rate. So I think that's dramatically different.

Then, of course, we were just in the teeth—just in the immediate aftermath of the defeat of the health care bill, where a vast amount of money had been spent to try to convince people that the Government was trying to take over health care. And I think now, when we went back to a step-by-step reform process, taking various elements that were in our original bill—like the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill that says you can't lose your health insurance if you change jobs or someone in your family gets sick, or the bill I signed yesterday, no more drive-by deliveries and a partial mental health insurance coverage included, and then the spina bifida benefits to Vietnam veterans with children—those things, they show that we're making progress on health care. Another very important provision we passed that was a part of our original bill was increasing the deductibility, tax deductibility of health insurance premiums that self-employed people have to buy.

So I think now when people see we're making progress in health care, we're going to do it step by step instead of trying to do it all at one time, so everyone can see that the Government's not trying to take over health care, we're just trying to create the conditions in which we can, if you will, enable the American people to fill in the blanks, to take these gaps, these terrible gaps and problems out of our system.

So I think the country is better off. A lot of those decisions look better in retrospect than they did in '94 because they've brought good results. And I also think that the things we've been doing in the last 2 years to build on that,

to show how this country can meet its challenges and protect its values, have been very helpful as well. So that's why I think it's changed. But it was not good here in '94. I think it's better here in '96. And the only thing I can ask the people of Texas to do is to look at the evidence, look at the record, listen to the alternatives, and make up their own mind.

Q. The CNN poll shows the race narrowing to 10 points now. Do you think Senator Dole's charges of being a liberal and the drug issue, is that having an impact or is this a natural narrowing or do you trust that poll?

The President. Well, it's hard to say. It's hard to say. I don't know. I just don't know. I'm not sure we know yet. You know, we probably have to let it simmer out another couple of days.

I think it is—I think if you look—on the drug issue, if you look at our record, if you look at the fact that I have—not only as President but as Governor—consistently opposed any legalization of drugs; consistently increased enforcement; that I passed a crime bill over the opposition of Senator Dole that had 60 death penalties in it, including capital punishment for drug kingpins; that I appointed, first, a former police chief of Houston, Lee Brown, and then the most—at the time he retired from the Army, the most decorated veteran in the American military, General Barry McCaffrey, to be our drug czar, so it's obviously important to me; and that I fought for programs that will help communities keep kids off drugs, like the safe and drug-free schools program, again over the opposition of Senator Dole and Mr. Gingrich—I think that, again, once people hear both sides of the argument, then they'll know that he can take one comment out of context and maybe make a television ad out of it. But the record shows a very different picture.

Now, I say that—all of us should be concerned about the fact that in 4 years, when cocaine use dropped by a third in America, it increased among teenagers. That should concern everybody. And everybody, including me, should be willing to assume some responsibility for that. I'm not trying to disclaim all. You know, if the efforts we're making to have good results should be credited, then we have problems; I have to take some responsibility for that. We need to—

it's much more serious than it's been treated so far.

For example, there's a lot of evidence that—in Canada, for example, tobacco and drug use among juveniles is up. In some European countries it is. And it appears that there was a beginning of a shift in attitudes about 1990 about how dangerous this is and that we, the adults of this country, and in other countries as well, have not succeeded in changing those attitudes back. And so I think it's a very serious issue. But I don't think his attack on me is very persuasive once you look at the facts.

And the liberal issue I just think, you know, it falls of its own weight. I do believe that there are differences between us. He was against the student loan program, and I improved it. He was against the family and medical leave, and I supported it and got it through. He was for the Gingrich-Dole budget, and I opposed it. So that's true. But I'm the first President since before the Civil War to reduce the deficit in all 4 years of his administration. We reduced the size of the Government more than my two Republican predecessors, not just in terms of employees but in terms of regulations and programs eliminated.

So I just don't think—and you know, I've got a crime bill that's the most conservative, tough crime bill that the country ever passed. And we moved almost 2 million people off welfare through giving the States and local communities more authority before the welfare reform bill ever passed. I think—again when the debates come on and when people look at all the evidence, that welfare charge, as you often hear down here in Texas, it's pretty hard to make that dog hunt, I mean that liberal charge. It'll fall to the evidence if people listen to it.

Press Secretary McCurry. We've got to go.

Q. Thank you for the time.

The President. Glad to do it.

NOTE: The interview began at 10:20 a.m. at Armadillo Willie's restaurant. In his remarks, the President referred to Truman Arnold, chairman and chief executive officer, Truman Arnold Companies, and Gov. George W. Bush of Texas. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.